



New York State Archives

**New York State Engineer and Surveyor Abandoned Canal
Lands and Blue Line Survey Files B0215**

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Table of Contents

Overview of the Records 3

Arrangement 3

Scope and Contents 4

Related Information 5

Use of Records 6

Access Terms 6

Overview of the Records

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| Repository: | New York State Archives |
| Summary: | These files, arranged by name of municipality where lands were located, consist of maps, correspondence, memorandums, reports, resolutions, descriptions of lands, appraisers' reports of encroachments, revised land appraisals, permits, and records pertaining to "blue line" surveys. Also included is financial information about land value and notes and descriptions regarding structures illegally built on state-owned lands. Land descriptions and appraisal reports contain detailed descriptions and measurements of lands and names of adjoining property owners. |
| Creator: | New York (State). State Engineer and Surveyor |
| Title: | Abandoned canal lands and blue line survey files |
| Quantity: | 8 cubic feet |
| Quantity: | (including approximately 400 maps) |
| Inclusive Date: | 1914-1923 |
| Series: | B0215 |

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Arrangement

Organized into 2 subseries: 1. Abandoned Canal Lands Files, 1916-1922, bulk 1920-1922, 7 cubic feet; 2. Blue Line Survey Progress Files, 1914-1923, 1 cubic foot.

Abandoned Canals Lands Files: Alphabetical by name of city, village, or town.

Blue Line Survey Progress Files: Chronological.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Scope and Content Note

The series consists of a variety of records generated in accordance with legislation that authorized the surveying and mapping of state owned land and the eventual sale of state lands abandoned once their usefulness for canal purposes was over. Records include maps, correspondence, memoranda, work reports, resolutions, descriptions of lands, appraisal reports, encroachments, revised appraisals, and permits.

The bulk of the series deals with the description, appraisal, and sale of abandoned canal lands by the state to the public. Additional records deal with the compilation of "blue-line" maps that show the boundaries of state owned land; these maps show state owned canal property and are thus closely related to the records of abandoned canal lands offered for sale.

Subseries 1, Abandoned Canal Lands Files, 1916-1922, bulk 1920-1922, 7 c.f. The records dealing with abandoned canal lands document the description, appraisal, mapping, and sale of those lands declared unnecessary for Barge Canal purposes as provided for under Chapter 299 of the Laws of 1916. This law required the State Engineer and Surveyor and the Superintendent of Public Works to make a report to the Canal Board describing in detail any lands and structures owned by the state for canal purposes that were no longer useful or necessary as parts of the Barge Canal system, as an aid to navigation or for public terminal purposes. The Board would then publish a resolution and notice of hearing, after which the lands or structures would be examined and appraised by the Commissioners of the Land Office, and offered for sale. A record of all papers filed with and proceedings of the Canal Board or Commissioners of the Land Office were to be kept by those offices. The act also specifies procedures for sale of abandoned lands or structures under preferential rights (to a city or village, or to an owner of a building located on abandoned land), or at public auction.

The 1916 law amended the Public Lands Law (Laws of 1909, Chapter 50). Prior to 1916 the selling of long stretches of abandoned canal lands had been prohibited by the State Constitution. Previous sales had been accomplished by conveying small parcels of land. With the sale of large tracts of state lands it now became critical that accurate maps clearly defining state property be compiled. Thus the "blue line" surveys allowed for by Chapter 199 of the Laws of 1910 became an integral part of the process of selling abandoned canal lines.

The abandoned canal land files include land descriptions, tracings, and appraisal reports. The descriptions are detailed measurements of lands proposed for sale. They also include in many instances the names of adjacent property owners. Occasionally verbatim transcripts of original deeds or patents filed with the Secretary of State or a county clerk's office are included. The appraisal reports contain the parcel number, measurement in square feet, unit price, total parcel value, date of report, and names of appraisers. Revised appraisals contain the same data as original appraisals. Occasionally permits may be present in some files. Usually these permits were filed if a city, town, or village wanted to build on state owned land (e.g., a sewer line). They provide the date of permit, description of construction project, to whom granted, conditions to be maintained, descriptions of special specifications and conditions, and names of individuals accepting the permit.

The tracings and blueprint maps are very detailed and provide names of adjacent property owners as well as identifying structures. Information varies. Some sheets have names of former owners of appropriated lands, and detailed references to bolts, survey points, triangulations and other measurements. Sometimes they are annotated with parcel numbers, acreage, and/or dollar amount paid (apparently at sale). Some are marked with a date they were examined and approved by department engineers and the State Engineer and Surveyor, or the date they were approved by the Canal Board. Most have a title and a scale, and some have the name of a preparer, with date.

Subseries 2, Blue Line Survey Progress Files, 1914-1923, 1 c.f. The records dealing with the blue line surveys document the progress of surveying and mapping done in response to Chapter 199 of the Laws 1910. They include land descriptions and tracings or blueprint copies of original maps. The 1910 law directed the State Engineer and Surveyor to "make the necessary surveys, field notes and manuscript maps" showing state-owned land, as well as ownership of adjacent property, along the Erie, Oswego, and Champlain canals. The original maps, after certification by the Canal Board, were filed in the Comptroller's Office. A transcript from the original or a copy certified as accurate by the Comptroller or the State Engineer and Surveyor was presumptive evidence in all legal proceedings.

The subseries also includes the following: annotated blueprint/whiteprint profiles of the progress of blue line surveying work, as well as progress narratives sent from division engineers to the State Engineer and Surveyor; correspondence related to proposed attributes and/or changes to the blue line maps, to be made before tracing; copies of instructions for blue line work issued by the State Engineer and Surveyor; weekly reports of work performed; letters of transmittal to the Canal Board of blue line maps (for approval) and to the Superintendent of Public Works (for filing); and correspondence on estimated costs and description of survey posts to be purchased for the work.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Related Information

Related Material

A0867Series A0867, Blue Line Maps of the Canal Lands Owned by the State, contains many of the original blue line maps

B0247Series B0247, Administrative Subject Files of the State Engineer and Surveyor, contains related records.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Use of Records

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions regarding access to or use of this material.

Access Terms

- Champlain Canal (N.Y.)
- Erie Canal (N.Y.)
- Land use
- Right of way--New York (State)
- Maps (documents)
- New York (State)
- New York State Barge Canal System (N.Y.)
- Maintaining infrastructure
- Permits
- Blueprints
- Reports
- Canals--New York (State)
- Managing land use
- Surveys
- Oswego Canal (N.Y.)
- New York (State). Canal Board
- New York (State). Department of Transportation
- New York (State). Commissioners of the Land Office